



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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**Testimony
submitted to the
Appropriations Committee
March 4, 2015**

HB 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2017

The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education appreciates the fact that HB 6824, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, at least maintains the current level of funding for important state education grants, including the Education Cost Sharing grant. We are well aware of the state's fiscal constraints, and respect the fact that the Governor has avoided making significant reductions that impact our public schools.

However, we must point out that in an era where local education costs continue to increase, despite efforts to achieve cost savings through such strategies as regional sharing of services, a flat funded education budget in fact means a reduction in programs and services that are available at the local level. Increasingly, the burden for paying for public education falls upon local communities and their taxpayers. We have seen an increase of the number of times a budget must go to local referendum – and each time it is a lower budget that is proposed. Given the number of new initiatives and reforms put in place by the federal, state and local governments, this is a time where we need an additional investment in our public schools.

CABE is concerned that several provisions of the bill do reduce or eliminate funding for specific programs that benefit our neediest students.

- This bill eliminates afterschool and summer school programs in priority school districts.
- The bill proposes a reduction of \$4.7 million in the Commissioner's Network program. It is important to continue support for the 16 network schools, and it is unclear whether additional schools will be added to the network, making the proposed funding inadequate.
- The bill eliminates state funding for Non-Sheft Region Interdistrict Cooperative Programs. These are programs that provide integrated, cooperative experiences for those many students who do not have the opportunity to attend magnet schools.

In addition, a number of reimbursement grants remain capped, including special education excess cost, transportation and bilingual education. With escalating costs, particularly in the area of special education, the percentage of state support for these programs continues to decline. We urge you to make full funding of the special education excess cost grant a priority.

Going forward it is imperative that Connecticut develop and utilize a funding formula that is transparent and equitable for students and can be consistently followed by the state to help enable schools and districts to provide every child with an excellent education.

We appreciate your ongoing support for the educational needs of Connecticut's public school children. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the Governor's office to ensure an appropriate investment in public education in the state budget.